

Message Text

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ACTION IO-14

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 EA-11 ISO-00 OIC-04 PM-07 NSC-07 SP-03

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FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0836

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C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 7185

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINR, OVIP, UN, LA

SUBJECT: BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ON LAO DELEGATION TO THE
29TH UNGA

REF: VIENTIANE 6829

FINAL COMPOSITION OF LAO DELEGATION TO 29TH UNGA WAS
ANNOUNCED IN CONNECTION WITH FOREIGN MINISTER PHOUMI
VONGVICHIT'S DEPARTURE FROM VIENTIANE. IT COMPRISES THE SIX
PERSONS MENTIONED REFTEL WHO ARE COMING FROM VIENTIANE AND
ON WHOM BIOGRAPHIC DATA FOLLOWS AND FIVE OTHERS ALREADY OR
SOON TO BE IN NEW YORK.

2. AS LISTED IN OFFICIAL LAO PRESSE, DELEGATION MEMBERS ARE:
PHOUMI VONGVICHIT, CHAIRMAN; KHAMPHAM PANYA, AMBASSADOR-
DESIGNATE TO U.S. AND UN; LEUAM RAJASOMBAT, SECRETARY-GEN-
ERAL OF FOREIGN MINISTRY; SOUBAN SRITHIRAT, CHEF DE CABINET,
FOREIGN MINISTRY; SOMCHIT PHILATHIVONG, DIRECTOR OF
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND ECONOMIC COOPERATION (IO),
FOREIGN MINISTER; DR. VITTHAYA SOURINHO, COUNSELOR OF
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LAO UN DELEGATION; KHAMSOUK CHANTHADARA, COUNSELOR OF

LAO EMBASSY/WASHINGTON; SOMBOUN SOMPHAN, COUNSELOR OF LAO UN DELEGATION; BOUN OM SOUTHICHAK, DEPUTY DIRECTOR IO, FOREIGN MINISTER; SENGDEUANE RATTANASAMAY, FIRST SECRETARY, LAO UN DELEGATION; AND DR. THAO BOUNSOUT, PERSONAL PHYSICIAN TO PHOUMI.

3. SUMMARY BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ON THOSE DELEGATION MEMBERS TRAVELLING FROM VIENTIANE IS AS FOLLOWS:

A. PHAGNA PHOUMI VONGVICHIT - PHAGNA PHOUMI (PHAGNA IS A LAO CIVIL TITLE OFTEN CONFERRED ON CABINET MINISTERS) IS THE FOREIGN MINISTER AND THE SENIOR OF TWO DEPUTY PRIME MINISTERS IN THE LAO PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNION (PGNU). DURING THE ABSENCE OF THE PRIME MINISTER, HE HAS BEEN CHARGED WITH THE CONDUCT OF CURRENT GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS, WHICH HAS MADE HIM THE APPROXIMATE EQUIVALENT OF ACTING PRIME MINISTER. FURTHER INFORMATION ON HIM IS AVAILABLE IN THE BIOGRAPHIC HANDBOOK.

B. LEUAM RAJASOMBAT - LEUAM, FROM THE VIENTIANE SIDE, ALSO HAS THE TITLE OF PHAGNA AND IS SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE FOREIGN MINISTER. HIS BIOGRAPHY IS AVAILABLE IN THE BIOGRAPHIC HANDBOOK.

C. SOUBAN SRITHIRATH - SOUBAN IS FROM THE PATHET LAO SIDE AND WAS DESIGNATED CHEF DE CABINET TO THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS IN APRIL 1974. SOUBAN, WHO SPEAKS GOOD ENGLISH, HAS TOLD EMBOFFS THAT HE STUDIED IN FRANCE FROM 1959 TO 1964 (TWO YEARS AT ST. CYR AND 17 MONTHS AT THE GENERAL STAFF COLLEGE). HE IS ORIGINALLY FROM KHONG ISLAND IN SOUTHERN LOAS AND IS IN HIS LATE THIRTIES; HE IS MARRIED AND HIS WIFE IS IN SAM NEUA, WITH THEIR FOUR-YEAR-OLD DAUGHTER. ALTHOUGH HE LOOKS RATHER SINISTER, SOUBAN HAS BEEN FRIENDLY AND BUSINESSLIKE IN OFFICIAL AND SOCIAL CONTACTS WITH AMERICAN OFFICIALS. HE HAS EXPRESSED THE DESIRE THAT AMERICANS AND LAO BETTER UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER.

D. SOMCHIT PHILATHIVONG - SOMCHIT, WHO IS FROM THE VIENTIANE SIDE, WAS RECENTLY APPOINTED DIRECTOR OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AT THE FOREIGN MINISTRY. HE
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IS 37 YEARS OLD AND HAS A DOCTORATE IN ECONOMICS FROM FRANCE. HE ENTERED THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS IN 1965 BUT LEFT IN 1967, BECAUSE OF WHAT HE CONSIDERED THE INANE WORK GIVEN JUNIOR OFFICERS AT THE MFA, AND BECAME A DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OF RURAL AFFAIRS. NEW TO HIS JOB, SOMCHIT LABORS UNDER NUMEROUS MISAPPREHENSIONS ABOUT THE USAID PROGRAM IN LAOS BUT IS PERSONALLY FRIENDLY TO AMERICANS. HE APPEARS TO HAVE LITTLE OR NO ENGLISH

BUT SPEAKS FLUENT FRENCH.

E. BOUN OM SOUTHICHAK - BOUN OM, FROM THE VIENTIANE SIDE, IS SOMCHIT'S DEPUTY. IN THE LATE 1960S, HE WAS A STUDENT AT THE LAW INSTITUTE AND LATER HELD THE POSITION OF SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION OF THE SAME SCHOOL. HE WAS RECENTLY ELECTED PRESIDENT OF THE ASSOCIATION. IN 1969, HE WAS APPOINTED TO THE EMBASSY AT PARIS AND IN JANUARY OF 1973 TO HIS PRESENT POSITION IN THE FOREIGN MINISTRY. BOUM OM IS SOFT-SPOKEN AND SOMEWHAT SHY IN THE PRESENCE OF AMERICANS; HE SPEAKS FLUENT FRENCH BUT LITTLE ENGLISH. HE REMAINS IN VIENTIANE FOR THE TIME BEING AND HAS SAID HE WILL JOIN DELEGATION ONLY WHEN HIS SUPERIOR (SOMCHIT) RETURNS TO VIENTIANE WITH FOREIGN MINISTER PHOUMI.

F. DR. THAO BOUNSOUTH - DR. BOUNSOUTH (THAO IS A LAO TITLE ROUGHLY EQUIVALENT TO "MR.") IS A SOMEWHAT MYSTERIOUS PERSONAGE FROM THE PATHET LAO SIDE WHO IS NOT EMPLOYED AT THE FOREIGN MINISTRY. HE IS REPORTED TO BE RESIDENT IN SAM NEUA AND IS CALLED PHOUMI'S "PRIVATE PHYSICIAN." FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS JOKE ABOUT HIS BEING MORE OF A PL POLITICAL DOCTOR THAN AN MD. HE WAS A MEMBER OF PHOUMI'S ENTOURAGE IN 1972 DURING THE NEGOTIATIONS THAT PRECEDED THE SIGNING OF THE VIENTIANE AGREEMENTS.

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